



TOWARDS NEW KASHMIR

INTRODUCTION

“Progress is relay race. It is no easy race. History Has known the invasion of vandals, the ‘sinister self-righteousness’ of the inquisition. But every new generation has received the torch from the bleeding hands of men of thought and light. Today this torch is firmly grasped in our hands.”.

Recently I was reading these words of a worlds-famous writer who is playing his part in the great struggle of the freedom-loving peoples of the world. And with it came the thought that we, the members of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, are fighting the same battle. The fight is no new one for us: it has got its heritage of the past, and it has its own vision of the future. But the fundamental elements of the fight are the same. It is for the poor, against those who exploit them, for the toiling people of our beautiful homeland against the heartless ranks of the socially privileged.....’

Our path in the past has been rough and stony, like the precipitous paths which wind up our mountains. The memory of our hundreds of martyrs is still green. Every year their graves are covered with flowers by the people, and every year in their presence we renew our pledge to achieve the freedom for which they died.

And the problems we have faced, and still face, are no small ones. The State of Jammu and Kashmir is the biggest in India, covering 84,471 square miles of mountains and valleys, lakes and lowlands. It is a Frontier state of no mere local importance. Its boundaries touch British India, Republican China, Buddhist Tibet and Soviet Russia.

Between the snow-adorned barrier ranges of the Himalayas, and the earth coloured and sun scorched plains of the Punjab, live our people, forty lacs of them in Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and the Frontier Regions, in Poonch and the Chinani Ilaqas. Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Christians, Kashmiri Pandits, Jains and Harijans inhabit the summer and winter capitals of Srinagar and Jammu. Thirty-nine towns and nearly thousand villages.

Ninety-six out of every hundred of our people draw sustenance from the land, and live in far-flung and isolated villages, oppressed by want and harried by disease. Their average yearly income barely reaches eleven rupees per head.

Therefore it has always been the goal of National Conference to fight the immemorial poverty of the peasant and the artisan, and the unmitigated helplessness of the worker. Born in 1932 as the Muslim conferences, it immediately became the spearhead of the masses of Kashmir, more than three-quarters of whom are muslims. It was during this period that the whole of India was shaken into new awakening following the Civil Disobedience movement of 1931, and it had its own psychological influence on us. The conference, though Muslims in name and spontaneous formed as an expression of the deep rooted sufferings of the people, was in spirit national, and was concerned with the welfare of all communities. The spirit is illustrated by what I said in 1935, in my appeal to men of all communities:

“My fight is for the emancipation of my country. Let us all rise above petty communal bickering and work jointly for the welfare of the masses. I appeal to my Hindu brethren not to entertain imaginary fears and doubts. Let us assure them that their rights shall not be jeopardized if they join hands with the Musalmans”.

Our movement was dynamic, and, as the years went on, rooted itself more and more deeply into the soil of the state. It was only in the logic of things therefore that in 1938 we formally converted the organisation into the All-Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.

Since then we have weathered many storms, and passed through many battles, and the conference has grown from strength to strength, by virtue of its democratic ideal and its ever-expanding mass following.

During the whole of this period we have been pressing for responsible government and the economic amelioration of the peoples of the state. We reached our first constitutional milestone in 1932 when the Legislative Assembly was constituted consisting of seventy-five members out of which, however, forty-two were nominated and only thirty-three were elected. The president was also an official. Representative of the conference entered the Assembly and constituted the largest single homogeneous group. This group, carried our struggle right inside the walls of the Assembly Chamber.

These last few years, when the world has been tormented by war and the invaders stand at the doors of India itself, the National Conference realized the supreme needs of the defence of the state, and that the problem of Kashmir was surrounded by wider concentric circles of the problem of India and the problem of the world as a whole. Therefore as patriots our task was to save our people from hunger at home and add our strength to the anti-Fascist struggle for the people of India and the world.

Towards that end, we mobilised the entire organisational strength of the National Conference, and took our share of the distribution of foodstuffs and fuel through People's Food Committees. Thus it was the National Conference which stood between starvation and the people, and rescued them from scarcity and want, in spite of bureaucratic interference and inefficiency.

1944 brings us to another milestone. The Working committee of the National Conference, which always has its hand on the pulse of the people, feels that at this time, when political and economic systems are in the melting pot and ideas of a New World order are being debated, it too must formulate more concretely its own conception of the New Kashmir it strives to build.....

The history of freedom movements from the Middle Ages to modern times had only one lesson to teach—that freedom from all forms of economic exploitation is the only true guarantee of political democracy, and without it, political freedom is a mere shibboleth. Even the winged ideals of 'Liberty', Equality and Fraternity' of the French Revolution bought it the price of the people's blood, degenerating in the autocracy of Napoleon. Because privilege and exploitation persisted in their old strongholds. Freedom and Privilege are two sides of a pair of scales as Privilege gets lighter, Freedom gets heavier.

In our times, Soviet Russia has demonstrated before our eyes, not merely theoretically but in her actual day to day life and development, that real freedom takes birth only from economic emancipation. The inspiring picture of the regeneration of all the different nationalities and peoples of the U. S. S. R., and their welding together into the united mighty soviet state that is throwing back its barbarous invaders with deathless heroism, is an unanswerable argument for the building of democracy on the cornerstone of economic equality.

Thus the National Conference envisages the future of New Kashmir in both political and economic terms. Towards that end we have drawn up a scheme which political is based on the democratic principles of responsible government, with the elective principle applied from the Local Panchayat right up to the National Assembly. This is linked with the ultimate responsibility of the Executive to the people.

In the economic sphere, we have gone on the principles that planned economy is of essence of progress, and that without it there can be no raising of the standard of living of the masses of the state.

Throughout the lean centuries of history the poor and exploited sons of Jammu and Kashmir have been the planquin bearers of Hindu monarchy and Buddhist rulers and Moghul emperors. The peasant sons of the valleys and the mountains have scratched only nine inches of top soil and eked out a bare existence. Now the time has come when they must dig deep into the bowels of the earth, and yoke the technique of modern science to the task of getting for themselves a bigger and better morsel of daily bread.

In our New Kashmir we shall build again the men and women of our state, who have been dwarfed by centuries of servitude, and create a people worthy of our glorious motherland.

S. M. ABDULLAH

Srinagar, 1944.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The test of statesmanship lies in finding a way to avoid depressions without plunging into war. That is the aim and hope of this report. We cure unemployment for the sake of waging war. We ought to decide to cure unemployment, the oppression of poverty and superstition, without war. The cure for the medieval darkness in Kashmir depends on finding a common objective that will be equally compelling on our efforts. The suggestions of 'New Kashmir' are that we should find that common objective in determination to make a Kashmir free of the giant evils of want, disease, ignorance and squalor. We cannot cure through hate of Pakistan; we ought to cure it through hate of these giant evils. We should make these in peace our common enemy, changing the direction and the speed rather than the concentration and strength of our effort. Whether we can do this, depends upon the degree to which social conscience becomes the driving force in our national life. We should regard want, disease, ignorance and squalor as common enemies of all of us, not as enemies with whom each individual may seek a separate peace, escaping himself to personal prosperity while leaving his fellows in the clutches; That is the meaning of social conscience; that one should refuse to make a separate peace with social evil. Social Conscience should drive us to different arms in a view war against these evils in Kashmir.

The worst feature of want in Kashmir is its concentration upon its workers, children, men and women. Wages are not adjusted in any way to family responsibilities-the various schemes have either ignored family responsibilities entirely or made inadequate provision for them. Want and its concentration on human beings represents a destruction of human capital none the less real because it did not enter into any economic calculus by the state. To free Kashmir from a needless scandal and a wasting sore-the 'Economic Plan' of the National Conference and also its 'Social Services' and 'Women's Charter' will deliver at the same time the first blow in the war against idleness. The re-distribution of income that is involved in abolishing want by social insurance, etc. will of itself be a potent force in helping to maintain demand for the products of industry, and so in preventing troubles. When democracy is built on the cornerstone of economic equality, the electoral system will be based on the basis of universal equal direct suffrage ballot and franchise shall be universal. The state will foster and encourage the growth and development of the languages of the state and women will have their just and rightful place in the mighty and responsible task of nation-building. Removal of any economic barrier between patient and treatment is an essential negative step for bringing avoidable disease to an end. There is

needed an immense positive extension both of preventive treatment and of curative treatment, through more and more hospitals, more and more doctors, dentists and other practitioners. There is needed, as an essential part of the attack on disease, a good policy of nutrition carried through by the wisdom of the state in using science. Here is a large field for communal outlay, using resources for purpose of high priority, in preserving the health and vigour of all.

Ignorance is an evil weed, which Pakistan may cultivate among its dupes, but which Shiekh Abdullah cannot afford among his citizens. Attack on it involves an immense programme of building schools, training and employing teachers, providing scholarships to fit opportunity to young ability wherever it is found. The report in its sections on 'Distribution', 'Production', etc. have shown the task for pressing the attack on ignorance with vigour and speed on all fronts. Learning and light must be kept together throughout life; and the National Conference knows that democracies will not be well governed till that is done. The makers of this socio economic programme, know and believe that in development of education lies the most important if not the most urgent, of all tasks of reconstruction. The needs of civilised men are illimitable, because they include the wise, happy enjoyment of leisure.

The policy outlined in the report is a policy of common action. If we attack determination, unity and clear aim the giant evils of want, disease, ignorance and squalor, we shall destroy in the process their confederate-the fifth giant of Idleness enforced by unemployment. The carrying out of the policy depends on the positive acceptance of a new responsibility by the state, that of ensuring adequate demand for the products of industry, however, industry itself may be organized. The policy preserves all the essential liberties; the political advantages are great and should be used. The programme of 'New Kashmir' concentrates in the Government of the day the great power without which the problems of a great society.

Cannot be achieved. It makes the use of that power subject to continual scrutiny by citizens and their representatives, and the power itself subjected to recall; the essence of democracy is effective means of changing the Govt. without shooting. Secondly the National Conference has a public service, central and local, second to none in respect of efficiency, integrity and devotion to duty. Through these advantages, New Kashmir has a chance of showing rapidly that democracy can order peace as well as war better than the dictators do.

But they have to win it, not wait for it. New Kashmir must be won by a democratic party. It is not a thing to be promised or not promised by a 'Government', to be given or withheld as from Olympian heights. It is something that the National Conference should direct the Government to secure, at all costs save surrender of the essential liberties outlined in 'New Kashmir'. If new Kashmir is not won and kept, no liberties are secure, for to many they will not seem worthwhile.

We the people of Jammu, Kashmir & LAdakh, in order to unite ourselves in an atmosphere of Equality and Liberty and to lift ourselves and our children for ever from the abyss of oppression, poverty, degradation, ignorance and superstition to a life of freedom with a scientific temper and to fulfil the historic task of making the state of Jammu & Kashmir the shining crown on the forehead of the Republic of India, do hereby adopt and solemnly pledge this Socio Political and Economic manifesto.

BASIC RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF A CITIZEN

Article-1. All the permanent residents of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh shall have equal status. The equality of their rights irrespective of their religion, race, colour, birth or sex in all spheres of life i.e., economic, political, cultural and social, shall be an irrevocable law. Direct or indirect restrictions on these rights or conferment of direct or indirect privileges for any citizen or group of citizens on the basis of religion, caste, colour, race, birth or sex and propagation of hatred and contempt on that basis shall be legally prohibited.

Article-2. Complete freedom of faith, conscience, worship and expression shall be guaranteed of every resident of the state.

Article-3. To promote political awakening and strengthening of democracy values and satisfying the aspirations of the people of the state, they shall be guaranteed the rights:-

- (a) To freedom of speech ;
- (b) To freedom of Press ;
- (c) To freedom of assembly and meetings;
- (d) To freedom of associations and organisations.

Article-4. The individual freedom of every resident of the state shall be recognised and protected.

Article-5. Except through the due process of law, the privacy and personal correspondence of all residents of the state shall not be interfered with.

Article-6. It would be the foremost and sacred duty of every resident of the state to defend the country. Disloyalty to the country and conspiracy with the enemy of the nation shall be considered the heinous crime. For the sacred duty of national defence every person shall have the right to get training in civil defence.

Article-7. Work shall be compulsory for all residents of the state who are fit to work. Every person shall have the right to work and employment i.e. he/she shall have the right to such work for which he/she gets the compensation according to its quality; provided that this compensation is not less than the minimum wages and more than the maximum income prescribed by the state. In case the state fails to provide employment to

any person, he/she shall have the right to unemployment insurance through which he/she can get necessities of life for himself/herself and his/her dependents. In order to ensure the right to work, economic development shall take place in a planned manner and means of production shall be expanded and developed. Simultaneous efforts shall be made to raise the standard of living of the people by eradicating economic inequalities and unemployment.

Article-8. All residents of the state shall have the right to rest. In order to ensure this right the maximum hours of work in a day shall be limited to 8 hours. Artisans and employees shall be entitled to paid holidays and recreation centres shall be set up for the working people.

Article-9. All residents of the state shall in the event of old age, illness and disability be entitled to get all their material requirements from the state. In order to ensure this right, the state shall provide for comprehensive insurance, free medical-aid and set up health for all workers, artisans and employees.

Article-10. Every person shall have the right to education. In order to ensure this right, there shall be compulsory primary education. In addition, adequate Government scholarships shall be provided to poor and deserving students to enable them to pursue higher education in schools, colleges and universities. Facilities shall be provided imparting primary education in the mother tongue of the students and to develop regional languages of the state. Arrangements for free academic, vocational and technical education shall be made for adult population of the state.

Article-11. In every field of life including economic, social and cultural as also in Government employment, women shall have equal rights with men. In order to ensure this right, women shall have the right to work in every job on the same terms and conditions and wages as are applicable to men. Women shall have the same rights for rest, social insurance in education as are available to men. Law shall especially protect the interests of mothers. A net-work of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens shall be set up to further secure these rights.

Article-12. All children of the state-subjects shall have equal rights and equal opportunities, irrespective of place of birth and the status of their parents. The state shall watch and protect the interests of the children who shall be entitled to paramount consideration in administrative and legislative matters, medical-aid, education system and industrial policies.

Article-13. All residents of the state shall be entitled to legal protection and to seek justice and protection of their rights from the courts of law. The administration of justice shall be made quick, cheap and impartial. In order to ensure this right, judiciary shall be independent. In order to provide justice to the people of the villages, mobile courts shall be established and free legal-aid shall be made available to the poor and deserving. The court language shall be Urdu but English shall remain in use till Urdu is able to replace it. In lower courts use of regional languages shall be permissible to the extent the interpretation of law is feasible. All residents of the state shall be equal before the law.

Article-14. Subject to the exigencies of planned economy and overall social objective of the state, every resident of the state shall have a right to property and inheritance.

Article-15. It should be obligatory for all residents of the state to abide by the constitution, observed laws, be disciplined, fulfil social obligations, and promote the basic national objectives of secularism, socialism and democracy.

Article-16. All residuary powers not mentioned in the Union list of constitution shall vest in the state except those delegated to the lower tiers in accordance with the provisions that shall be made in the constitution of the state.

Article-17. The political power shall be equitably distributed among the regions of the state and would be further decentralized at lower levels like districts, blocks and panchayats. The appropriate institutions elected by the people shall be set up at the respective levels to exercise political power that may be delegated to them. The method of elections might vary at different tiers of administration. To start with only such powers and functions shall be actually decentralised and exercisable by the respective authorities as are considered feasible and manageable. After gaining proper experience the power and functions of the lower tiers shall be expended; subject always to the over-riding consideration of strengthening the unity and integrity of the state.

Article-18. At the state level the majority party in the Legislative Assembly direct elected on the basis of adult franchise shall form the Government. The voting age may be reduced to 18 years. Every voter, unless disqualified through due process of law, shall have right to elect and to be elected.

Article-19. The Council of state shall give due representation to backward classes, intellectuals, artists and social workers and those communities which have not been properly represented in the Legislative Assembly and shall be constituted through nominations and electoral colleges which shall be prescribed.

JUDICIARY

Article -20. Judiciary of the state shall be independent under constitution of the state and the Union.

The High court shall be the highest judicial authority in the state, subject only to the supreme court, in matters in which its jurisdiction has been accepted by the state. The High court shall be charged with supervision and direction of all the subordinate courts and the entire judicial work.

Article-21. An officer of the rank of Chief Justice shall be appointed for receiving complaints and grievances of the people against any officer of the executive or member of the council of Ministers. He shall have access to all official files and records. His office shall be autonomous and he shall have the authority to make his recommendations directly to the Head of the state.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Article-22. The official language of the state shall be Urdu. It shall be a link language between various regions and communities of the state. Other official languages of the state which shall be used for the purpose as would be specified, include Kashmiri, Dogri, Punjabi, Hindi, Gojri, Pahari, Bhadarwahi, Dadri, and Bultistani.

PLANNED DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMY

Article-23. The economy of the state shall be planned with a view to ensuring a rapid rate of economic growth along with increasing social justice. The aim of self-sufficiency shall be pursued in so far as it contributes to maximisation of total income of the state and it is consistent with the objectives of the National Plan.

Article-24. The plan shall aim at raising the standard of life of the people. The essential needs of people should not only include adequate food,

shelter and clothing but also other necessary social services detailed as follows:

- (a) Universal, free and compulsory education upto primary level and provision for academic and technical education at the university levels.
- (b) Free medical-aid to the weaker sections of the society under a comprehensive Health Plan. It should also provide for Health insurance so that there is no loss of income to those people who are disabled temporarily or permanently on account of illness, accidents or other troubles.
- (c) The basic and heavy industries and all those enterprises which are of strategic value or of monopolistic type or are beyond the capacity of private enterprises shall be nationalised. The rest of the economy shall subserve social objectives and to the extent possible be organised on co-operative lines so that economic development does not lead either to regimentation or to undue inequality of incomes.
- (d) The economy shall aim at full employment and ensure right to work, in accordance with mental and physical capacities of the people. Dignity of labour shall be maintained so that work whether physical, intellectual, artistic or social shall be equally respected and equitably rewarded.

BROAD FEATURES OF PLANNING

Article-25. The Economic Plan of the state may be sub-divided into following broad categories: -

- i) Production
 - (a) Agriculture
 - (b) Industry
- ii) Tertiary Sector
 - (a) Transport Policy
 - (b) Trade
 - (c) Tourism and
 - (d) Credit Institutions.
- iii) Distribution
 - (a) Co-operative agencies

- (b) Price Control
- iv) Social Services
 - (a) Education
 - (b) Health
 - (c) Housing
 - (d) Cultural activities
- v) Women's charter.

PRODUCTION

Article-26.

(a) AGRICULTURE

A bulk of the population of the state, as in the rest of India, earns its living through agriculture. The development of the agricultural sector shall be the foremost task of the Government.

The term agriculture is being used in a wider sense to include not only cultivation of soil and production of crops but also agro-based industries, forestry, horticulture, animal husbandry and subsidiary rural industries. The basic objectives of the agricultural policy shall be equitable distribution of land and elimination of parasites, middlemen and others who do not directly engage themselves in cultivation of land and do not contribute to its productivity. The agriculture operations, including irrigation, marketing, and distribution of fertilizer and seeds shall be far as possible, be organised on cooperative basis. The agricultural production shall conform to the overall requirements of the state planning which would determine respective priorities and allocations for the production of food crops, cash crops and other raw materials for industry. Adequate funds shall be provided for research to increase the productivity of land by intensive and scientific methods of cultivation.

- (b) The state shall make comprehensive plan for the reclamation of land which is eroded by rivers, nallahs and rains. All such reclamation lands shall be distributed to the landless people.
- (c) Minimum wages of agriculture labour shall be fixed. Mechanisation shall be introduced in a planned manner and only to the extent it increases productivity of land, ensures better distribution of agricultural incomes and does not aggravate the problem of rural unemployment.

- (d) Crop-insurance shall be introduced so that farmers are insured against vagaries of Nature as also possible risk involved in the application of new technology and use of modern agricultural inputs.

Article-27. Modern methods of Dairy Farming shall be introduced and nomadic Gujaris shall be permanently settled in suitable colonies. Facilities for preservation and marketing of milk products like cheese, butter and cream shall be provided through co-operative agencies of Government owned milk schemes.

Article-28. Special efforts shall be made for encouraging fruit cultivation particularly in hilly areas. Industries for canning and preservation of fruit shall be set up to provide maximum gain to fruit cultivators. The role of the middle man shall be eliminated.

The state give credit facilities on easy terms for the development of rural and cottage industries including weaving, handicrafts, beekeeping, rearing of silk worms etc.

Adequate facilities shall be provided for the cultivation of fish, its preservation and marketing.

Article-29. Forests shall be declared as the property of the people to be supervised and watched by the village panchayats. The needs of the people including that of timber, fuel and grazing shall be provided consistent with the forest policy of the state particularly keeping in view the need of checking soil-erosion.

Article-30. An agriculture council shall be set up in the state to evolve and effectively implement an agricultural policy to reorganise agriculture institutions and modernise its economy. Its function shall include the following:

- (i) To advise in the preparation of production plans for each crop and to supervise its production;
- (ii) To supervise and guide the harvesting of crops, production of fruits and to arrange for storage, grading and marketing;
- (iii) To provide agricultural finance through banking and other financial institutions.

- (iv) To develop and co-ordinate village industries in accordance with the overall plan of the state.

PEASANT'S CHAPTER

Article-31. Every peasant shall have the right to work on land unless he is provided with alternative work on similar remuneration.

All sorts of parasitism on the land shall be abolished and shall not be allowed to re-occur in a disguise and in any other form.

Every peasant family shall be guaranteed a minimum standard of living in accordance with the prescribed norms. The peasant shall be provided with agricultural credit for the development of his farms and rural indebtedness from money lenders abolished.

The peasants along with other workers of the state shall be entitled to the benefit of social insurance. The peasant shall be protected against famine, floods, fire, illness and disease of the cattle and other animals through comprehensive insurance. The benefits of modern scientific research shall be made available to the peasants in particular in the following matters :

- (a) Soil-testing
- (b) Planning of crops
- (c) Production of green, bone and scientific manures as also manures produced by the treatment of human waste,
- (d) Irrigation facilities
- (e) Drainage facilities, prevention of water logging and pollution of supplies,
- (f) Anti-erosion measures
- (g) Planned introduction of machinery in consistence with the employment policy of the state.
- (h) Teaching of better agricultural methods through demonstration and inclusion of lessons on better technology in the educational curriculum

- (i) Provision of free refrigeration facilities, cold storage and warehouse and prevention of waste food-grains and agricultural products.
- (j) Guidance for organising of poultry farms and dairy on modern lines and arrangements for their proper marketing.
- (k) Village sanitation, improvement of drinking water, prevention of stagnation of water pools etc,
- (l) Peasant and their families shall have the right of free medical and nursing facilities,
- (m) Peasant shall have the right to possess suitable houses,
- (n) Peasant shall have the right to recreation community life and facilities for indoor and out-door games and for community radio and T.V sets. The peasants like other residents of the state shall have the right of education including vocational education with an agricultural bias.

(B) INDUSTRY

Article-32: There shall be three broad sectors of industrial economy:

- i) Public sector
- ii) Private Sector
- iii) Cooperative sector

All these industrial enterprises which are of strategic value of monopolistic character and beyond capacity of private enterprises shall be nationalised and put in the public sector. Forest reserves and mineral deposits shall be reserved for public sector.

Private sector shall work within the board frame-work of the industrial policy of the state and shall conform to the social objectives. The small scale industry i general shall be reserved for the private sector.

Co operative sector shall receive special encouragement and facilities in terms of credits and supply of raw materials to enable it to gradually take the place of private enterprise to the extent possible.

PLAN FOR INDUSTRIES

Article-33: The industrial plan shall be worked out as an integral part of the five year plans of the state and the country and co-ordinate not only various sectors of the industry but also the economy as a whole.

INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL

Article-34: In order to direct, supervise and control process of industrialisation in the state in accordance with the objective of the overall plan, an industrial council shall be set up. The main function of this shall be as follows:

- i) To assess potentialities of setting up various kinds of industries in different parts of the state in accordance with the local needs availability of raw materials and marketing facilities.
- ii) To undertake research work pertaining to industrial development, to co-ordinate different sectors of industry on the one hand and industry as a whole with the overall plan of the state.

HANDICRAFTS & COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

Article-35: The handicrafts and cottage industries are not only a vital part of the economy of the

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